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ABSTRACT

This publication is a module designed for use in undergraduate and graduate courses in early childhood, reading, children's literature, and special education and for in-service courses for paraprofessionals. The module is presented in two parts. Part one is the manual, which (1) describes the mode of administering the module and (2) briefly describes each activity/element with suggestions for the instructor and comments on the materials. (MB)

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INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

COMPETENCY BASED TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
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READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN

HELEN CONSTANT

RICHMOND COLLEGE

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MODULE DESIGN

The "Reading Aloud to Children" module has a pre-assessment, a post-assessment, three instructional elements, assessment scales to accompany the elements, self-checking answer keys for these scales, and this manual.

The module was designed to be used in undergraduate and graduate courses in early childhood, reading, children's literature and special education and for in-service courses for paraprofessionals. Although the module has been written with a small group setting in mind, it may be used in an individualized program as well with slight variations in the valuation procedures. In both cases the student should spend no more than 8 hours maximum on the work for the module.

ADMINISTERING THE MODULE

The evaluation procedures for each activity/element have been predicated on peer-grouping. Each student works with two or three peers--but no more than five total--in observing and recording observations on the assessment scales. They compare observations and try to reach a consensus. If they all rate the reader the same way--checking off the same yes answers for the same questions--they consider themselves in agreement and can move on to the next activity/element. If there is no consensus, they have two options. They can observe another reader (or film or videotape) and record the new set of observations or join another group of peers and

observe with them. Obviously, if the emphasis is on individualizing the module, your students will be more likely to choose the latter--that is, moving to another group. If, on the other hand, your students prefer to work within a set group most of the time, they will try to arrive at a consensus by group discussion, new observations, and recording of new data. Whatever mode they prefer is up to them. However, it is more effective if they stick with one style or the other.

If no consensus can be reached on a series of observations, your students are instructed to come to you to resolve the conflict.

You might also want to look over individual observation sheets (the various assessment scales) before students move from one element to the next, but it is by no means necessary.

The pre-assessment and post-assessment are essentially the same and are measured by the same instrument (Assessment Scale A). You will review the videotape with each student and each of you will record your observations on the scale. When the tape is finished, compare your rating with that of the student's and discuss any major discrepancies. This review of the tape is a place for direct guidance and gives you an opportunity for individualizing the module to meet the needs of individual students.

The rest of this manual consists of a description of each student activity/element with suggestions for the instructor and comments on the materials included wherever relevant.

Pre-Assessment

If a student thinks that he is competent in achieving the objectives of the module without working through it, he will take the pre-assessment. This entails the preparation of a videotape in which he reads literature to children. Together with the instructor he will rate his competency by use of Assessment Scale A. If he achieves a score of 80%, he will have fulfilled the requirements of the module and receive credit for it. Otherwise, if he wishes to continue, he will have to proceed to Required Activity A.

Element I

The student selects one of the following three activities.

Activity 1. The student will read two selections included in the appendix. Arbuthnot's "How to Read Stories Aloud" and Vandergrift's "Reading Aloud to Young Children" and answer the questions on Assessment Scale B. They will check their answers with the answer key. If the student scores 80% or higher on the total test, he has completed the activity and can proceed to Element II. Otherwise, he will have to wait two days, then read the selection again and score himself. If he still has not reached the mastery score, he must go to his instructor for help.

This activity is an excellent one for an individualized program.

Activity 2. The student will view the film "The Pleasure Is Mutual." The film is well done. It shows teachers at day-care Centers and librarians at libraries reading to children. The

rapport that the readers have with their children, the expressions on their faces and those of the children, their ability to read the book without complete reliance upon it, and their reading techniques are all excellent. However, there are a few limitations. The voices of the teachers (librarians) are not always well modulated or pleasant. Occasionally, the reading is quite fast, the voices shrill, and the words not clearly enunciated.

Children's work is rarely seen. The titles of the books that have been read should be placed around the room so that children can learn to read them in an incidental manner. Drawings of their favorite scenes as well as their favorite characters, with writing on each, should be visible. Rhythmic language, colorful words all need to be displayed.

Another limitation is the lack of conversation. Children do not have the opportunity to share the pleasure through discussion. Nor do they have the chance to develop their thinking powers. There is no attempt to develop vocabulary with children whose language may not yet be sufficiently developed. The children should be given a chance to relate their own experiences to the plot and title of the story and to express their reactions to the content.

Although there are limitations to the film, many positive things can be learned from it. The student should evaluate his observations by using Assessment Scale C and the Answer Key. If he receives a score of 80% or higher on the total test, he has completed the activity and may go on to Element II. If he has scored less than 80%, he must wait two days, then view the film

again and score himself. If he still has not reached the mastery score, he must see the instructor.

Activity 3. The student goes to a library of his choice with his peer group and observes a librarian reading to children during the story hour. He must take Assessment Scale A with him, evaluate the librarian, and compare the ratings with those of his friends. If the ratings differ markedly, the three should visit another librarian's story hour and see how the new ratings compare. If there is still a great divergence, the students will ask you to resolve the conflicts.

Element II

The student views a videotape of two classroom teachers reading literature to children. The first teacher is reading to children in Grade I; the second, to children in kindergarten. The teachers have different styles and different personalities. The first situation is a more formal one. Both teachers have been able to arrange the seating so that the children are close to them and the illustrations are visible. They not only hold the attention of the children but also know how to attract their attention when they become distracted. Both use their faces, their hands, and their voices expressively.

In each setting the books are displayed in an appealing manner. One of the outstanding features of the videotape is the voice quality of the teachers. In each instance the tone is pleasant and the words clearly enunciated. The first grade teacher's voice is especially resonant. The two teachers also have good follow-up activities. In the first instance, it is immediate; in the second, anticipatory.

The teachers diverge in their questioning techniques as well as in their follow-up activities. When questioning children about the story, it is important that critical thinking take place. The types of questions asked determine the quality of the responses. Questions beginning with "How" and "Why" are more likely to elicit critical thinking responses than those beginning with "What." Although the first teacher asks some "why" questions, the "what" predominate. Thus, there is little discussion taking place. It is also interesting to note that the first teacher does most of the talking. Because of her questioning technique, the children do not have the opportunity to talk as readily. Without discussion, it is difficult for critical thinking to take place, an important process of the reading act.

The second teacher asks questions that result in involved discussion on the part of the children. She is accepting of their responses, yet intervenes when she thinks that their statements are illogical.

Although the two teachers have similarities as well as differences in their techniques both have ignored a crucial element when reading to the children. Neither explains nor discusses any new vocabulary words in the story that the children may not know. This is a very serious defect and obviates one of the objectives of reading to the youngsters.

After the student has viewed the videotape, focusing on the points enumerated in the module, and evaluated the teachers by using Assessment Scale A, he will discuss the reading act with his

peers. In the case of an individualized program, the discussion procedure will be eliminated; all other steps will be followed.

Element III

The student practices reading a story to his peers. They will rate him by using Assessment Scale A. If he scores 80% or higher, he can proceed to the post-assessment. Otherwise, he should wait two days, then read the selection again and score himself. If he has not reached the mastery score, he must go to his instructor for help.

Post-Assessment

The student prepares a videotape of himself reading to children and evaluates it with a faculty member using Assessment Scale A. He must meet 80% of the criteria to exit from the module. Otherwise, he will meet with his instructor and design an individualized program of study.